Director’s Message

The Catholic Schools Performing Arts Gala, Time to Shine is an inaugural event to be held at the Palais Theatre on Saturday 13 September 2014 at noon and 5.00 pm.

Time to Shine will showcase the artistic talents of up to 400 students from Catholic secondary schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Students will feature as dancers, musicians and singers in this high-calibre artistic production.

This two-hour entertainment line-up, jam-packed with 26 acts, will both delight and enthral audiences.

Rehearsals have been taking place for more than six months and the depth of talent is enormous. We all need to be there as our students and our creative team truly deserve our support.

Tickets are available from Ticketmaster.

Thank you for your support of our students.

Stephen Elder
Executive Director of Catholic Education

It would be appreciated if this newsletter could be provided to members of boards or parent groups.

Building better boards

BOARD RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Ensuring your board is adding value to the school strategically and operationally starts with the selection of your board members.

There is no single answer to how to best recruit your board members.

A recruitment process that is contextualised to your community’s needs can help grow your school and assist in achieving its goals.

Consider the following process:

- determine the qualities and skills required of Board members based on a needs analysis, which is discerned from the Board Strategic Plan/School Improvement Plan/Annual Action Plan
- assess the requirements and ascertain any gaps
- align eligibility and tenure of board members with reference to the Board Constitution and incorporation documents where relevant
- establish a standing Board Committee (Term 1, 2014 page 2) consisting of members from within and external to the board, to:
  - identify
  - interview
  - conduct due diligence, interviews and checks
  - to recommend potential board members who would be clearly briefed on the vision, mission, goals and objectives of a Catholic school and board
- consider short-term observer status to potential board members as recommended
- conduct a clear and concise induction program,* which includes follow up debriefing
- provide ongoing formation and professional learning
Enhanced effectiveness of a board partly depends on the transparent linking of board membership to the strategic plan of the board.

* see http://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/schimp/boards/PEB_Developing_an_Effective_Board.htm#board_induction

**Reflect and consider**

**All parents have dreams for their children and want the best for them.**

**All parents have the capacity to support their children's learning.**

**Parents and school staff should be equal partners.**

**The responsibility for building partnerships between school and home rests primarily with school staff, especially school leaders.**

How are your parents dreams and aspirations for their children and their partnering role with school reflected, in your

- schools vision and mission
- in your schools policy, processes and procedures
- in your schools strategic plan and goals
- in your school or college board strategic plan and goals.
STAY CONNECTED – Access key resources

✓ Visit the VCSPB website – parents and schools have collated resources available in one place on:

- bullying
- Catholic identity
- curriculum
- parent engagement
- parenting
- safe schools.

✓ Place a link to the VCSPB website on your school website.

✓ Subscribe to the VCSPB newsletter online.

✓ Participate in online surveys.

✓ Activate your very own reserved VCSPB email account. Check that the on-forwarding email address is still current. If assistance is required please contact the Catholic Education Office Melbourne ICT Helpdesk on 9267 0422 or via email ictsupport@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au.

HUMAN DIGNITY – A RICH CONCEPT

By Joe Doolan, RE Resource Writer, Religious Education & Catholic Identity, CEOM first published in the CEOM Director’s eNews No.12, 1 August 2014

What do we mean when we talk of the dignity of each person? There are four elements that comprise human dignity. The first of these is well known; the other three are perhaps not so familiar.

Made in God’s image

Every person is an Imago Dei, made in God’s image. Humans are God’s confederates, sharing a role in life and a worth that transcends that of other created animals or things. This wonderful biblical insight was placed by the early Hebrew theologians at the start of the Jewish Scriptures (Genesis 1:26). In the Christian narrative this concept gained a new interpretation in the person of Christ, who ‘is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word’ (Hebrews 1: 2). Since we are made in God’s image, an authentically lived human life is also an evangelising statement about God. The mystery of human life also announces the mystery of God. Our creative works – the newborn child, transformed landscape or artistic piece – echo God’s creative work. We can detect a divine faithfulness in the steadfast care of loved ones, and can sense Christ’s humility in the service of those in need. The school is a privileged place for young people to grow in their own image of God. It is an evangelising community that announces to the world who God is.

Transcendence

A second component of human dignity is the transcendent element of our being. Whether we choose to name it ‘transcendence, open-ended otherness, singularity, awe or mystery’ (Kelly 2014, p. 161) we are attached to the Otherness of life. St Augustine famously wrote that our hearts are made for God and we are constantly searching for God. ‘Late have I loved you …’

Our existence has a trajectory beyond this life. Aligned to this transcendent element is the belief that eternity will be shared in communion with God and others. It is inconceivable that we should share eternity without some connection with others and especially our loved ones. The dignity of the human person encompasses the idea of an eternal destiny in communion with others and with saints (Feiner 1975, p. 547).

People long for an encounter with God. One role of a Catholic school, much like a merchant in search of the precious pearl, is to persistently offer prayer experiences, confident that, through this ministry, the genuine searcher can find and meet God. This idea of an encounter with God is not limited merely to prayer and worship elements but can be experienced in a myriad of ways within the school week.

In planning day-to-day activities schools strive to provide regular prayers, liturgies, reflections, and guest speakers that will name and nurture for both staff and students this transcendent dimension of our lives. A paucity of prayer experiences in a school somewhat stymies the human dignity of all, not merely the Christian dignity of the baptised ones. A rich fare of awe-inspiring rituals with song, symbol, story and silence nourishes the heart, soul and strength of everyone.
**Shared common good**
The dignity of a person is also linked to their shared life in the human community. This third component of a communal dignity encompasses a connection to others via a *shared common good*.

This attribute also embraces a certain commitment to the whole world and an assumed responsibility for it. The charge given by God is to care for the animals, protect the planet and guard against elements that might disrupt the balance of the cosmos. Dignity demands the proper exercise of our dominion over the world. A great example of this shared common good is the outstanding social justice ventures our schools and colleges embrace. The school’s role in fostering a community contribution is important for teaching and learning the nature and importance of human dignity.

Contributing to local groups (St Vincent de Paul, Caritas) and community initiatives is a vital way that students can experience and build the common good. Articulating this relationship and noting the response made by the Catholic community to humanitarian endeavours is an important evangelising role of the school.

**Wholeness of being**
A fourth element of authentic dignity, rarely stressed, is the notion of personal unity: we are called to be *complete beings*. We are created for wholeness of being – in us and in others. Our human dignity demands that we toil to alleviate all forms of poverty – economic, cultural, spiritual – anything that detracts from the wholeness of an authentic existence.

From this it follows that the sacredness of each element and phase of human life must be respected. Our schools are called to foster the image of *wholeness* when approaching each individual. As Chicago’s Cardinal Bernadin famously said, the holiness of life must be defended as a ‘seamless garment’ from conception of the individual to that person’s last breath. All the elements that combine to fashion the complex dignity of the human person must be respected, nurtured and given opportunities for growth. Any experience, process or program that truncates the ‘completeness’ of a person disrupts the human vocation to live a life of dignity.

The school is a privileged place for fostering the *wholeness* of each person. Cultivating the physical, emotional, cultural, spiritual and artistic development of students is the cornerstone of Catholic schools. Fostering the wellbeing of staff, students and their families is part of this imperative of promoting the dignity of all.

In supporting these four dimensions of human dignity in our schools we are just following Christ, our model of authentic human life. ‘I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full’ (Jn 10: 10).

**References**